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News Items from the School of Education of the University of Chicago

EFFECT OF VARIOUS INCENTIVES ON IMPROVEMENT IN ADDITION

An attempt to determine the effect of various incentives on improvement in addition was recently undertaken in an investigation by Lucius O. McAfee, A.M., State Normal School, Minot, North Dakota. Six types of motivation were used with a group of elementary-school children, as follows: no incentive given, standards of achievement emphasized, rivalry stimulated by a "Red and Blue" contest, exemption from practice allowed for improvement, extra practice required after school as a penalty for poor work, and prizes in money.

The conclusions regarding the value of these incentives follow: (1) Almost any incentive gives better results than are secured when no incentive is given. (2) The form in which the experiment was organized made it impossible to draw any definite conclusions concerning the effect of emphasizing standards. The effect seems to have been spread over the weeks that followed as well as while they were being emphasized. (3) Rivalry tends to stimulate speed, but with such a lowered accuracy that the net result in number of rights remains the same. (4) Prizes in money caused even higher speed than rivalry without concrete reward, but with such lessened accuracy that the net number of rights was even less than normal. (5) The offer of exemption from practice tended to improve the accuracy without any appreciable effect on speed. (6) The penalty of staying after school tended to reduce speed with no corresponding increase in accuracy. In many cases there was a decrease in accuracy as well.

HISTORY OF THE LEGISLATION FOR PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF KENTUCKY SINCE 1850

In all statistical studies of educational progress Kentucky has been ranked low. In a recent investigation, M. E. Ligon, A.M.,

principal of the Ashland High School, Ashland, Kentucky, attempted to discover the fundamental causes for the low rank given to this state. The constitutions of 1850 and of 1890, the session acts of the General Assembly, the reports of the superintendent of public instruction, and the census reports of the United States were examined for data.

The conclusions reached were: (1) The population represents a very conservative type slow to break away from established habits and customs. (2) The local school district was made the unit of administration in the law of 1852 and remained fixed until 1908. This extreme democratic type of administration did not stimulate effective efforts in the development of schools. (3) A system of state taxation for schools was inaugurated by the law of 1852 which overshadowed the importance of local taxation. As a result, local districts relied solely upon funds received from the state. This dulled the interest of the people in the management and success of local schools. (4) The state refused to provide for the training of teachers until 1906. (5) No educational or administrative qualifications were required of the superintendent of public instruction. (6) The qualifications of the county superintendent were so nearly on a level with those of the teacher that professional leadership was lacking.

Indications that the state is taking on new life in education are: (1) State normal schools were established in 1906. (2) The district as the administrative unit was abandoned in 1908, and the county was made the unit. (3) County high schools were made compulsory in 1908. (4) Local taxation for schools has been made compulsory in city and county. (5) The election of the county superintendent by the people has been abandoned, and his appointment is placed in the hands of the county board of education. (6) The qualifications of the teachers have been increased. (7) The certification of the teachers has been placed in the hands of the State Board of Education.